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# THE PAST AS A MESSIANIC VISION: HISTORICAL THOUGHT AND STRATEGIES OF SACRALIZATION IN THE EARLY *GONGYANG* TRADITION

Joachim Gentz

## *Introduction*

I would like to divide my paper into five parts: 1. The past (this will imply the *Gongyang zhuan*'s historical criticism of sources and its historiographical attitude towards the past); 2. as a messianic vision (this will deal with the function and application of the historical material for the *Gongyang zhuan*'s own vision); 3. Historical thought (this will analyse how the contradiction between historical criticism and the application of it for the *Gongyang zhuan*'s own vision is perceived and solved); 4. Strategies of sacralization (where it will be shown how this historical thought is realized in exegetical practice) and 5. The early *Gongyang* tradition (in this last part further stages of the development of the *Gongyang* exegesis in the Early Han and the process of its establishment as a canonical work will be depicted).

## *1. The Past*

There are two possible questions to ask about historical criticism in the *Gongyang zhuan*. Firstly, we can ask how critically it reflects and uses historical source material in its own commentary. Secondly, we can investigate which historiographical attitude towards historical events is propounded by the *Gongyang zhuan* as the proper one, either by explicit statements, or by its own exegetical practice, or by the historiographical practice ascribed by the *Gongyang zhuan* to Confucius' *Chunqiu* compilation.

1. As to the first question we might differentiate six different historical sources of which the *Gongyang zhuan* makes use for its commentary. First, it quotes glosses. Second, it quotes ritual rules. Third, it quotes historical narratives of the sort which *Zuozhuan*, *Guoyu*, *Guliang zhuan*, *Hanshi waizhuan* and other early texts also use or refer to.

Fourth, it quotes one sentence from the *Shangshu*.<sup>1</sup> Fifth, it quotes exegetic explanations from early *Gongyang* masters like Luzi 魯子, Zi Shenzi 子沈子, Zi Gongyangzi 子公羊子, Zi Simazi 子司馬子, Zi Beigongzi 子北宮子, Zi Nüzi 子女子, Gaozi 高子 and “someone” (*huo* 或).<sup>2</sup> Sixth, it quotes sayings of Confucius. The sources of the glosses, of the ritual rules, of the historical narrative and of the *Shangshu* quote are not indicated as such. The sayings of the *Gongyang* masters and of Confucius are introduced by quoting their names. Since we find many of the ritual rules quoted as individual rules in ritual works in which these rules are part of a systematic listing and are listed together with other, similar rules, and since there is at least one ritual rule which we also find quoted as a rule from the *Wangdu ji* 王度記, a ritual work composed around King Xuan of Qi (320-301 B.C.) within the context of the Jixia academy,<sup>3</sup> we may conclude that the *Gongyang zhuan* did not invent these rules but rather took them over from existing sources. Based on the evidence of parallel texts, we may assume the same for the glosses<sup>4</sup> and the

<sup>1</sup> *Shangshu* 6-12-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Luzi* 魯子 3-3-4, 3-23-10, 5-5-6, 5-20-3, 5-24-4, 5-28-17; *Zi Shenzi* 子沈子 1-11-4, 3-10-3, 11-1-4; *Zi Gongyangzi* 子公羊子 2-6-5, 7-5-5; *Zi Simazi* 子司馬子 3-30-7; *Zi Beigongzi* 子北宮子 12-4-6; *Zi Nüzi* 子女子 4-1-6 and *Gaozi* 高子 6-4-2, *huo* 或 (4-2-6, 5-33-3, 8-1-6, 9-19-2).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Liu Xiang “Bielu 別錄”, quoted in the subcommentary of Kong Yingda 孔穎達 to the *Liji* in: *SSJZS*, p. 1566.1. Liu Xiang ascribes the book to the academic context of the Jixia scholar Chunyu Kun 淳于髡 etc. Chun's biography in the *Shiji*, however, does not contain any reference to such a work. Cf. *SJ*, p. 2347. Chunyu Kun is several times listed as one among other Jixia scholars (cf. *SJ*, p. 1894, 2346), in the context of which Liu Xiang perhaps wants to define the *Wangdu ji*. It was included as a chapter in the *Da Dai Liji* but has since been lost. All in all, nine quotes from it are transmitted in the *Baihu tong* and in the commentaries to the classics and dynastic histories. Thus it is possible to know what sort of work the *Wangdu ji* was. Cf. Zang Yong 臧庸 quoted in Gu 1979: 7. Cf. also He 1966: 4-6. From these fragmentary accounts it becomes evident that it must have been a work in which the different ritual and bureaucratic grades were noted in regard to their salary (*lu* 祿) and authority. The order of offices was noted as well. Thus all those standards which are denoted by the term “*du* 度” were recorded. This accords with the title of the work which could be translated in detail as “Records of [ritual-administrative] measure-units [for the rule] of a [true] king”. We know of such ritual-administrative passages from different chapters of the transmitted literature, for example the three “Wang zhi 王制” chapters in *Xunzi*, *Liji* and *Da Dai Liji* - and we know that there are many parallels between the ritual rules of the *Gongyang zhuan* and this literature. Thus it is not surprising that one of the nine transmitted rules from the *Wangdu ji* parallels one of the ritual rules of the *Gongyang zhuan* nearly verbatim: this shows the close referentiality of these works.

<sup>4</sup> We sometimes find the same glosses in other early commentaries, where they are not always formulated in dialogical form (a commentarial form which can already be found in the Guodian text *Cheng zhi wen zhi* 成之聞之) as we often find in the *Gongyang zhuan*.

historical narratives also.<sup>5</sup> For the *Shangshu* quote this is self evident. Obviously, the *Gongyang zhuan* assumed that these sources contained historically reliable material on which it could draw for its own explanations. If we take a closer look at the quotes we notice that we have in most cases slight variations from the parallel texts. These variations, however, are not motivated by the concrete exegetical move which involves them but rather seem to be due to different transmissions. What is striking is the fact that there is not a single quote from the *Shijing*. Apart from the sayings of the *Gongyang* masters, the *Gongyang zhuan* never adduces a source in order to make its interpretation authoritative. The very common formula “*Shi yue* 詩曰” or “such-and-such a chapter of the *Shangshu yue*” is absent. The *Shangshu* quote is not indicated as such. Even the very common formula *gu yue* 故曰 (that is the reason why it is said:) which can be found 11 times in the *Guliang zhuan* and 14 times in the *Zuozhuan*, is missing in the *Gongyang zhuan* although it can be found as part of a central argumentative rhetoric throughout most of early Chinese literature.

So the first conclusion we may draw is that the *Gongyang zhuan* evaluates historical narrative, ritual rules and the *Shangshu* tradition as general trustworthy historical sources. The sayings of the *Gongyang* masters and of Confucius are more special and probably more authoritative, and have to be quoted explicitly in the specific

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<i>Erya</i> 爾雅, “ <i>Shi ming</i> 釋言”:	“晦,	冥也.”
<i>Guliang zhuan</i> 5-15-11:	“晦,	冥也.”
<i>Gongyang zhuan</i> 5-15-11:	“晦 者何?	冥也.”
“ <i>Xia xiao zheng zhuan</i> 夏小正傳”:	“萬也 者, 干戚	舞也.”
<i>Gongyang zhuan</i> 7-8-6:	“萬 者何? 干	舞也.”

We see from different transmissions of the same commentary that the dialogical form of question and answer can easily be changed through the adding of a single word:

<i>Wuwei Han jian</i> 武威漢簡 “ <i>Sang fu zhuan</i> 喪服傳”:	“斬 者, 不緹也.”
<i>Yi li</i> 儀禮 “ <i>Sang fu zhuan</i> 喪服傳”:	“斬 者何? 不緹也.”

<sup>5</sup> Noma Fumichika counts more than 40 historical narratives in the *Gongyang zhuan*. Showing how smoothly the exegetical text after those passages may be connected to the text before, he argues that those passages (which those in the *Hanshi waizhuan* most resemble) have obviously been inserted later, at the very end of the completion of the *Gongyang zhuan*, into an earlier commentary. Cf. Noma 1996: 105–108. However, as Sekiguchi Jun argued 20 years earlier, in reply to a similar argument made by Yamada Taku in his famous article (1957), the specific exegetical method of the *Gongyang zhuan* is based on the narratives and could not work without this historical evidence. Cf. Sekiguchi 1976: 16–21.

exegetical context. The *Shijing*, however, is not used as a source with which the truth of historical judgments can be convincingly proven.

2. As to the second question, about the proper historiographical attitude propounded by the *Gongyang zhuan*, we find two different sides.

a) First, there is a striking proximity to what is generally known as the scepticism of the *Lunyu* Confucius,<sup>6</sup> who not only did not talk about what he did not know<sup>7</sup> but who consequently also praised ancient scribes for leaving blank spaces in their texts when they did not know the facts.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the *Lunyu* we find many statements which express in more detail an attitude of Confucius which is full of doubts, uncertainties and not-knowing.<sup>9</sup> We find many sayings in which Confucius is filled with sorrow or despair,<sup>10</sup> in which he admits that he does not know an answer and has no solution for certain fundamental questions.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, there are many clear statements about what Confucius did not talk about and did not teach.<sup>12</sup> Although the topic of the need to be careful and prudent with your words frequently occurs in the *Shangshu* and in old ritual chapters like the “Ziyi” chapter of the *Liji* (of which a version was found among the texts excavated in Guodian dated to the middle of the Zhanguo period [around 300 B.C.] in which this topic is stressed even more strongly than in the received version [which differs slightly] of the *Liji*) this old topic differs from

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Gentz 1998.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Lunyu* 3.11, 5.8, 5.19, 13.4, 15.1 (with *Lunyu*-internal unintentional verification in 16.1) etc., also cf. 2.17, 2.18, 11.12, 13.3.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Lunyu* 15.26: 子曰。吾猶及史之闕文也。有馬者借人乘之。今亡矣夫。 The Master said: I still hold on to the times when scribes left blanks in their texts. When someone had a horse he would lend it others for a ride. Nowadays all of this is lost!” I follow the traditional reading of this passage. In the *Lunyu* normally the single character *wen* 文 never has the meaning of “text.” In 3.9 it appears as part of the compound *wenxian* 文獻, where it obviously means “text.” In ZZ 10-1-*fu*8 the meaning “text” for *wen* appears. The meaning of *wen* as “text” may thus be established. To read *shi* 史 in the meaning of “historiographer” and not as “expert of rites” seems to be admissible, too. For a history of that term cf. Cook 1995: 250–255. The traditional reading of that passage also seems to be plausible if the second part of the passage containing the horse analogy (as something of one's own which one gives away to someone else without keeping control over it) is taken into account. For a similar attitude of Confucius in other texts than the *Lunyu* cf. Schaberg 2000: 19–21.

<sup>9</sup> *Lunyu* 2.17, 3.11, 5.8, 5.19, 13.3, 13.4, 15.1.

<sup>10</sup> *Lunyu* 5.10, 5.11, 5.27, 7.3, 7.5, 7.25, 9.9, 11.2, 13.21, 15.13.

<sup>11</sup> *Lunyu* 2.17, 3.11, 5.8, 5.19, 13.3, 13.4, 14.41, 15.1.

<sup>12</sup> *Lunyu* 2.18, 7.27, 3.21, 5.13, 7.1, 7.21, 7.23, 7.24, 9.1, 9.7, 11.12, 13.3, 14.6.

the one in the *Lunyu*. In *Shangshu* and other old texts we always find the opposition of speech and action, *yan* 言 and *xing* 行. The need to be cautious in speech is always related to the danger of its consequences in concrete action. Speech is always seen in such a way that its effects are perceived as parallel to the effects of a normal action. This is the reason why a ruler has to be cautious in speech as well as in action. In the parts of the *Lunyu* I have just pointed out, the necessity for careful words is the result of the specific attitude towards the unknown spheres as described above. The subject addressed is the gentleman, not the ruler.

If we read through the two main texts which throughout the Confucian literature are said to have been the basic teaching material of Confucius, the *Shangshu* and the *Shijing*, we will find almost no theoretical explanations of supernatural events. The *Shangshu* reports many calamities which are sent down by heaven, but these calamities are always man-made, for example invasions, rebellions, usurpations etc. We never find any natural calamity or anomaly described as being sent down by heaven as a response to human conduct, in order to punish or to warn, such as we often find in later texts.<sup>13</sup> In the *Shijing* there is one eclipse of the sun which results from bad human conduct,<sup>14</sup> and apart from this we only find good harvests as an unspecific indicator of good government and regular sacrifice. Talk of supernatural events in the realm of nature is thus nearly absent in the two books which are said to form the basis of Confucius' teaching. These attitudes are also reflected in the exegetical practice of the *Gongyang zhuan*:

It is often frankly admitted in the *Gongyang zhuan* that the meaning of a certain *Chunqiu* passage is not clear any more, or is even unknown. The *Gongyang zhuan* in these passages uses the formula *wu wen* 無聞 (I have not heard anything about)<sup>15</sup> or it gives two alternative options without deciding which one is right and which one is wrong, using the formula *wei zhi qi wei x yu? wei y yu?* 未知其為 x 與? 為 y 與? (we

<sup>13</sup> The only exception is a passage in the "Jin teng 金縢" chapter, for further details see note 60.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Shijing*, Shi yue zhi jiao 十月之交, Mao no. 193.

<sup>15</sup> *Gongyang zhuan* 1-2-7, 2-14-3, 6-14-11.

can not know whether *x* or *y* is the case).<sup>16</sup> Sometimes different opinions concerning a certain affair are given - again without deciding upon right or wrong, and using the formula *huo yue x* (*huo yue y*) 或曰 *x* (或曰 *y*) (one opinion states *x*, [another opinion states *y*]).<sup>17</sup> The *Gongyang zhuan* here follows an attitude which in the *Gongyang zhuan* itself is ascribed to Confucius' *Chunqiu* compilation:

*Chunqiu*:

五年，春，正月，甲戌己丑，陳侯鮑卒。

In the fifth year, in spring, in the first month, on the day *jiaxu* [or] *jichou*, Bao, the Marquis of Chen, died.

*Gongyang zhuan*:

鮑卒何為以二日卒之？悫也。甲戌之日亡，己丑之日死而得，君子疑焉，故以二日卒之也。

Why are here two [alternative] days taken for the recording of Bao's death? He became mad. On the day *jiaxu* he disappeared and on the day *jichou* he was found dead. The gentleman was in doubt and therefore recorded two dates for the death.<sup>18</sup>

Among the approximately 140 entries concerning calamities or anomalies (*zai yi* 災異) there are only two entries which reflect the cause of these natural calamities and anomalies.<sup>19</sup> In both heaven is

<sup>16</sup> *Gongyang chuan* 2-9-4, 6-11-6, 9-2-7, 10-31-6, 12-14-1. In its openness to two alternative options the expression *wei zhi* clearly differs from the way this expression is used in *Lüshi Chunqiu jiaoshi*, p. 232 and 402 etc., where Christoph Harbsmeier has shown that in these passages suppositions are expressed. Cf. Harbsmeier 1998: 251.

<sup>17</sup> *Gongyang chuan* 4-2-6, 5-33-3, 8-1-6, 9-19-2. Yamada Taku has adduced these passages as an indicator for the multi-layeredness of the *Gongyang zhuan*. He opposes these passages to all those passages (32 in total) where *Gongyang* statements have an uncertain status through the usage of the character *gai* 蓋 perhaps/seemingly). Cf. Yamada 1957: 166–169.

<sup>18</sup> *Gongyang zhuan* 2-5-1. It is interesting to have the *Guliang* commentary here which reads: 鮑卒何為以二日卒之？春秋之義，信以傳信，疑以傳疑。陳侯以甲戌之日出，己丑之日得，不知死之日，故舉二日以包也。” Why are two [alternative] days given here for the recording of Bao's death? The righteous rule of the *Chunqiu* is that if something is trustworthy it is transmitted as trustworthy and if there is something doubtful it is transmitted as doubtful. The Marquis of Chen left on the day *jiaxu* and on the day *jichou* was found. Since the day of his death is not known, two days are adduced in order to be sure to include the correct date.” Here again the term “trustworthiness” (信) is used as a historiographical term.

<sup>19</sup> *Gongyang zhuan* 5-15-11, 7-15-9 (probably also 12-14-1).

said to respond to certain human actions, or to send a warning. These two statements show that a relationship between natural deviations and human conduct is conceptualized. However, there is no attempt to formulate any more specific theory nor is this point elaborated any further. Instead, most of the entries about natural calamities or anomalies are not commented on at all. The *Gongyang zhuan* at the most only explains that this is an entry concerning a natural calamity or anomaly but never comments on its cause. In my view one can take this silence as a practice of not talking about supernatural phenomena and which reflects an attitude ascribed to Confucius by Sima Qian, who writes in his “Tian guan” chapter: “Confucius expounded upon the Six Classics, he recorded abnormalities, yet did not write down any explanations” (孔子論六經，紀異而說不書).<sup>20</sup> The *Gongyang zhuan* on this point seems to follow the “rational attitude” also ascribed to Confucius in earlier works.<sup>21</sup> It thereby expresses the same basic attitude towards things unknown upon which no decisions are made.

This basic attitude is also reflected in the way the *Gongyang zhuan* imagines Confucius’ compilation of the *Chunqiu*. According to the *Gongyang zhuan*, Confucius compiled the *Chunqiu* by not altering the original text. In the same way as the invisible realm of the spirits and ghosts is not spoken about, the invisible realm of the past is also not penetrated through Confucius’ own statements or speculations. Again, we know this attitude from various *Lunyu* passages.<sup>22</sup>

We thus find that the attitude, praised throughout the *Lunyu*, whereby explicit admissions of missing knowledge are made, is reflected also in the exegetical practice of the *Gongyang zhuan*. Unlike the *Lunyu*, however, the *Gongyang zhuan* does not say anything about these attitudes and does not attribute them explicitly to Confucius. We only find them implicit in the exegetical practice of the commentary.

b) On the other side there is, of course, a *Gongyang* commentary to the famous passage about the historiographer Dong Hu.

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. *SJ*, p. 1343.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Lunyu* 2.17, 2.18, 5.13, 7.21, 10.17, 13.3, 13.12 etc. as well as *Guoyu*, “Lu Yu xia,” 201, 213, 214 etc.

<sup>22</sup> The most prominent passage describing this attitude is *Lunyu* 7.1: 述而不作，信而好古 “in transmitting and not myself creating, I am trustworthy and love antiquity.”



晉史書賊曰：晉趙盾弑其君夷皋。趙盾曰：天乎無辜，吾不弑君！誰謂吾弑君者乎？史曰：爾為仁為義。人弑君，而復國不討賊，此非弑君而何？

[After the assassination of the ruler of Jin, Yi Hao] the historiographer from Jin made a record of the assassination as follows: 'Zhao Dun assassinated his ruler Yi Hao.'<sup>23</sup> Zhao Dun thereupon cried: 'Heaven! I did not commit this crime! I did not assassinate the ruler! Who said that I assassinated the ruler?' The historiographer thereupon said: 'You are human and righteous. Thus if others assassinate your ruler and you return to your state without punishing the assassination, what is that but an assassination of your ruler?'

From other passages we can infer that the *Gongyang zhuan* ascribes the historiographical attitude of the historiographer Dong Hu also to Confucius' *Chunqiu* compilation. According to the *Gongyang zhuan*, Confucius, like Dong Hu, ascribes certain assassinations not to the actual murderer but to the one responsible for the assassination.

In the commentary to the eleventh year of Duke Yin we read:

何以不書葬？隱之也。何隱爾？弑也。弑則何以不書葬？春秋君弑，賊不討，不書葬，以為無臣子也。子沈子曰：君弑，臣不討賊，非臣也。不復讎，非子也。葬，生者之事也。春秋，賊不討，不書葬，以為不繫乎臣子也。

Why has the burial [of Duke Yin] not been recorded? In order to commiserate with him. Why commiserate? He was assassinated. If he was assassinated, why should his burial then not be recorded? The *Chunqiu* has [as a general rule of record] that the burial is not recorded if a ruler has been assassinated but his murder has not yet been punished, because it considers that [unless this has been done] there are no [true] ministers and sons. Zi Shenzi said: 'If a ruler has been assassinated and his ministers do not punish the murder then they are no [true] ministers. If the sons do not take revenge they are no [true] sons.' The burial is a matter for the living. In not recording the burial, the *Chunqiu* considers that it cannot associate the burial with any [true] ministers or sons.

The moral guideline followed by Dong Hu is here also taken as the basis of a historiographical rule in the *Chunqiu* (which gains further strength through reference to the exegetical authority of the early *Gongyang* master Zi Shenzi). Here what is important is that is not only the actual assassin who should be judged but also the people who

<sup>23</sup> This record can be found verbatim in *Chunqiu* 7-2-4.

have to handle the aftermath of the assassination and thereby show whether they are true subjects or not.

The basic principle which lies behind this sort of historiography is the recording of what I would call a “ritual reality”, in opposition to what we understand as positive facts. This historiography of ritual reality concerns four aspects. First, with regard to the historical action, the action may be recorded according to its motivation or intention and not just according to its factual form. Second, with regard to a person, it means that persons beneath a certain rank, or those who have disqualified themselves morally or ritually through bad behaviour (such as regicide or patricide) are not mentioned in the *Chunqiu*, just as if they did not exist. Third, with regard to a particular matter, the historiography of ritual reality is expressed through the accordance or non-accordance of the recorded matter with the code of ritual behaviour. A burial which is not correct ritually is not a burial and is therefore not recorded. Fourth, with regard to the state of Lu, there is a ritual reality of its own, which consists only of good matters. Bad matters are tabooed. Taboo and shame are depicted as ritually correct elements of the attitude of a historiographer. Taboo, shame and tactical considerations of the historiographer (in this case Confucius) are given as legitimate reasons for deviations in recording and could be subsumed under the notion of “ritual recording.” Finally, the *Gongyang zhuan* contains the rule that something may be allowed in practice but not in the realm of written records (*shi yu er wen bu yu* 實與而文不與). This is a very subtle case of distinguishing valid pragmatic action from the realm of the rules of ritual recording and, of course, has an effect on the historiographical record as well.

A comparison with passages from the *Zuozhuan*, in which we are told something about the working of the *Chunqiu* historiographer shows, as Yuri Pines has demonstrated that according to the *Zuozhuan*, 1. Ritual report and not the political significance of an event led to its being recorded,<sup>24</sup> 2. Rules of taboo (*hui* 諱) prevented the annalists from recording assassinations or humiliations of their rulers,<sup>25</sup> and 3. Historical records very early served as instruments for the praise and blame of historical personalities.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Cf. ZZ 1-11-*fu*4, noted by Pines 1997: 84.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. ZZ 5-17-4, 6-2-3, 8-10-6, 10-16-*fu*1, noted by Pines 1997: 85. For *Zuozhuan* passages which contain taboo formulae, cf. Emmrich 1992: 34.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. ZZ 6-15-2, 9-20-*fu*, noted by Pines 1997: 85, n. 32.

Finally, the Confucius of the *Gongyang zhuan*, despite his high estimation of historical truth and his strict historical criticism, respects in the *Chunqiu* an unrealistic and moral-ritual record in those cases in which a moral or ritual judgment, and thus a moralistic or ritualistic principle of recording, is the basis for the record. He does not acknowledge such a record in cases where it seems too fantastic and implausible, as in certain records regarding abnormalities which, according to the *Gongyang zhuan*, were recorded in the unrevised *Chunqiu* (*bu xiu Chunqiu* 不修春秋): 不修春秋曰：雨星不及地尺而復。君子修之曰：星貫如雨。”The unrevised *Chunqiu* says: ‘Like rain, falling stars fell to within a foot of the ground and then returned.’ The gentleman (Confucius) revised it and wrote: ‘stars fell like rain.’”<sup>27</sup> In these cases Confucius leaves the fantastic part aside and revises the more technical part in a way which, in his view, seems to be understandable.

## 2. As a Messianic Vision

That the *Gongyang zhuan* is so well known for its “messianic vision” is due to its Han interpreters Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 195-115 B.C.) and, above all, He Xiu 何休 (129-182 A.D.), who extracted abstract sets of guidelines from the *Chunqiu* which may be taken as a political program, or as legal rules serving the ruling house of Han.<sup>28</sup> There is, however, no evidence in the *Gongyang zhuan* itself for any “messianic vision” that might be associated with the Han dynasty. The central passage upon which such an interpretation was built is the commentary to the last *Chunqiu* record, in which the *Gongyang zhuan* writes:

君子曷為為春秋？撥亂世反諸正，莫近諸春秋，則未知其為是與？其諸君子樂道堯舜之道與？末不亦樂乎堯舜之知君子也？制春秋之義以俟後聖，以君子之為，亦有樂乎此也。

Why did the gentleman make the *Chunqiu*? To eradicate disorder and to return to the correct there is nothing as close as the *Chunqiu*.<sup>29</sup> Yet, we can not know any more<sup>30</sup> whether it was made<sup>31</sup> for this purpose or

<sup>27</sup> *Chunqiu* 3-7-3.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Gentz 2001. Cf. also He Xiu's commentary, *SSJZS*, p. 2353.1

<sup>29</sup> Compare *Mengzi* 3B9, 4B21.

<sup>30</sup> For *ze* 則 as “resumptive conjunction” cf. Dobson 1974: 734, 5.1.6.

whether<sup>32</sup> he rejoiced to pass on the Way of Yao and Shun.<sup>33</sup> And was it in the end not perhaps the delight of knowing that someone like Yao and Shun should in a later age recognize the gentleman?<sup>34</sup> To obtain the righteousness of the *Chunqiu* in order to await later sages—it was also this in which the gentleman was delighted when making [the *Chunqiu*].

In this passage the *Gongyang zhuan* gives three options as to the purpose of the *Chunqiu* compilation. The first one is a political vision which can also be found in the *Mengzi*. The *Chunqiu* was written by Confucius in order to bring order into the world which had fallen into chaos. The second option would be the joy Confucius felt in transmitting the Way of Yao and Shun. The third would be the relief that some later sage would, perhaps on the basis of the *Chunqiu* message, recognize the wisdom of Confucius. This last vision of awaiting later sages was interpreted as pointing towards the Han ruling house which had already been foreseen by Confucius, and for which the *Chunqiu* was actually written. Be that as it may, from the evidence of the text itself it is clear that some “messianic vision” of a right-ordered world ruled by a future sage ruler in the way of Yao and Shun is envisaged. The death of the unicorn, which is the topic of the last *Chunqiu* record, is commented on in the same passage as follows:

<sup>31</sup> In opposition to the two *Mengzi* passages which use the verbs *zuo* 作 and *cheng* 成 for the “making” of the *Chunqiu*, here the verb *wei* 為 is used, which is less precise.

<sup>32</sup> The expression *qi zhu x yu?* 其諸 x 與 ? occurs in six passages of the *Gongyang zhuan* 2-6-5, 4-1-6, 5-2-3, 5-24-4, 7-5-5, and 12-14-1. In four cases exegetical additions of early exegetical masters from the *Gongyang* tradition are dressed up in this question form, in one case it is used in the question of an adviser who makes a wrong supposition, and in this case it is used within an exegetical supposition. In all four cases it is used in carefully formulated suppositions which are answers to questions. These questions are (as propositions) posed in a slightly suggestive way and always mean something like: “I am not sure but I suppose that...—isn't it perhaps like...?”. Dobson in this case takes *zhu* 諸 grammatically as the fusion (“allegro-form”) of *zhi hu* 之乎, a construction which he denotes as a “particle of sentential mood” which expresses “doubt, tentativeness etc.” Cf. Dobson (1974: 451) with examples from *Lunyu*, *Mengzi* and *Liji*, “Tan gong xia.” There, however, *zhu* 諸 always stands in “second post-verbal position” at the end of the sentence and does not imply any suppositional connotation, instead expressing doubts openly.

<sup>33</sup> The grammatical construction here *ze wei zhi qi wei x hu? (qi) y hu?* 則未知其為 x 乎 ? 其 y 乎 ? is used several times in the *Gongyang zhuan* and expresses (as in 11-1-1 *wei ke zhi* 未可知) an irremediable lack of knowledge, which results in the impossibility of deciding between two given options. *Gongyang zhuan* 2-9-4, 6-11-6, 9-2-7, 10-31-6. The question particle *yu* 與 may be taken as *ye hu* 也 乎. Cf. Dobson 1974: 866.

<sup>34</sup> This is an implied reference to *Mengzi* 3B9 where Confucius is quoted as saying: 知我者，其惟春秋乎；罪我者，其惟春秋乎。 “Those who understand (*zhi* 知) me will do so only through the *Chunqiu*. Those who condemn me will do so only through the *Chunqiu*.”

The *Chunqiu* record reads:

春西狩獲麟。

In spring in the west a unicorn was caught during a hunt.

The *Gongyang zhuan* comments:

何以書？記異也。何異爾？非中國之獸也。然則孰狩之？薪采者也。薪采者則微者也，曷為以狩言之？大之也。曷為大之？為獲麟大之也。曷為為獲麟大之？麟者仁獸也。有王者則至，無王者則不至。有以告者曰：有麋而角者。孔子曰：孰為來哉！孰為來哉！反袂拭面，涕沾袍。

Why was this written? In order to record an extraordinary event. What is extraordinary here? It is not an animal from the Central States. So who hunted it then? It was someone who gathered firewood. Someone who gathers firewood has a low position, why is it then said that he hunted it? In order to magnify the event. Why magnify it? It was magnified on account of the capture of the unicorn. Why was it magnified on account of the capture of the unicorn? The unicorn is an animal of humaneness. If there is a [true] king then it appears, if there is no [true] king then it does not appear. When someone came to report on it and said: 'We have a roe with a horn', Confucius said: 'For whom has it come! For whom has it come?' He turned his sleeve and wiped his face. Tears wet his robe.

Contrary to the interpretations of the two other *Chunqiu* commentaries, the *Gongyang zhuan* interprets the capture of the unicorn as an extraordinary event which has a central meaning in Confucius' life. It is interpreted as a heavenly sign of the rule of a sage king who is to come.

Another part of the same last passage gives us further evidence as to what sort of vision might be envisaged:

春秋何以始乎隱？祖之所逮聞也。所見異辭。所聞異辭，所傳聞異辭。何以終乎哀十四年？曰：備矣。

Why does the *Chunqiu* start with Duke Yin? It was up to this time that the forefathers [of Confucius] knew from hearsay. He used different wordings for matters he had seen himself, for matters he had heard of, and for matters transmitted through hearsay.<sup>35</sup> Why does the *Chunqiu*

<sup>35</sup> This expression is used three times in the *Gongyang zhuan*, Yin 1.7, Huan 2.4 and Ai 14.1. In each case it is noted that Confucius in the *Chunqiu* chose his

end in the fourteenth year of Duke Ai? [Confucius] said: 'Everything is completed (or: prepared/ready)!'

Now, in the fourteenth year of Duke Ai (481 B.C.) there is only one great event in the history of the Central States in China. It is the precise year in which the Tian 田 family took over and began to rule the state of Qi.<sup>36</sup> In my view, therefore, the arrival and capture of the unicorn in the *Gongyang* interpretation probably points to the new ruler of Qi. The *Gongyang zhuan*, which is traditionally associated with the state of Qi,<sup>37</sup> seems to be an attempt to formulate, on the basis of its *Chunqiu* exegesis, a system of rules for a united state under the rule of Qi.

The function of the historical material of the *Chunqiu* is thus the same as we have seen from the earliest mention of the *Chunqiu* in the *Yu cong I* excavated in Guodian:

春秋 所以會古今之事也。

The *Chunqiu* is that through which the matters of the past and the present are brought to a meeting.<sup>38</sup>

This means that the past may be used to serve the present.

The basis for the realization of this messianic vision is the message which is said to have been inserted into the *Chunqiu* by Confucius in order to fulfil the vision. It is obvious that the historical text must be changed if something is inserted into it. We thus encounter the problem that despite all the strict historiographical rules mentioned above, which serve to sustain the trustworthiness of the historical material of the *Chunqiu* and work against a darkening of the truth

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expressions according to whether the incident (1) Belonged to a period which he himself had witnessed, or (2) was one of which he had heard first-hand from eye witnesses, or (3) had come down to him through transmission (by his forefathers). For a more detailed account of the three periods (*san shi* 三時) cf. Woo 1932: 88–106, especially 90–91 also Ojima 1990: 294–312, 299–300.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Yang 1997: 701; Lewis 1999: 598.

<sup>37</sup> Recent research seems to confirm this association. Not only does the language of the *Gongyang zhuan* seem to be close to the early Qi dialect (cf. Wang (1998), but also the Qi rulers, as well as Qi marriages, are presented in a very positive way, cf. Kotera 1998: 120. Furthermore the *Gongyang zhuan*, like the *Chunqiu*, follows the calendar of Qi, which is not the case for the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guliang zhuan*, cf. Hirase 1998: 165–170, 2000: 138.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted according to the *Jingmen shi bowuguan* 荆門市博物館 edition 1998: 194–195.

through untenable speculations, the historical text has to be changed in order to transmit the vision which is to be expressed through it.

### 3. Historical Thought

We thus have the following contradiction within the *Gongyang zhuan*: On the one hand it observes strict rules regarding the historical correctness of its commentary, but on the other the central assumption of its commentary is that the historical material was modified by Confucius in order to insert his own message, which consists of correct judgments concerning the historical material. We thus have a contradiction between the truth of the historical material on the one hand, and the truth of the judgments upon the historical material on the other. The author of this passage of the *Gongyang zhuan* is conscious of this contradiction. It expresses its own view about this contradiction through a comment made by Confucius in the following passage, where the *Gongyang zhuan* discovers what it thinks is an erroneous name in the following *Chunqiu* record:

*Chunqiu*:

十有二年，春，齊高偃師師納北燕伯于陽。

In the twelfth year, in spring, Gao Yan from Qi led a batallion and enthroned Bo from North Yan in Yang.

(The *Gongyang zhuan* reads: “In the twelfth year, in spring, Gao Yan from Qi led a batallion and enthroned Bo Yuyang.”)

In order to correct this mistake the *Gongyang zhuan* gives a gloss explaining what should be written instead at that place:

伯于陽者何？公子陽生也。

Who is Bo Yuyang? It is Gongzi Yangsheng.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Chunqiu* 10-12-1. The Confucius quote in the commentary is based on a misunderstanding of the text. The designation of the place Yang 陽 is taken as a part of the (incomplete) name Bo Yuyang 伯于陽, which according to the *Gongyang zhuan* should in its complete form be Gongzi Yangsheng 公子陽生. Bo 伯 is taken as a miswriting for gong 公 and yu 于 as a miswriting of zi 子. The character sheng 生

Afterwards it quotes Confucius as follows:

子曰：我乃知之矣。在側者曰：子苟知之，何以不革？曰：如爾所不知何？春秋之信史也，其序則齊桓、晉文，其會則主會者為之也，其詞則丘有罪焉爾。

The master said: ‘I knew about that, indeed.’<sup>40</sup> Someone standing by thereupon said: ‘If you knew about that mistake why didn’t you change it?’ Confucius said: ‘If I would just do that what should I do with all the things I do not know?’<sup>41</sup> The trustworthiness of the scribes of the *Chunqiu* lies exactly in the fact that the orders of succession of the historical actors are the ones made by Duke Huan of Qi and Duke Wen of Jin, and those of the meetings are the ones made by the leaders of the meetings and my only guilt lies in the wording.

According to the *Gongyang zhuan*, the Chunqiu scribes are “trustworthy” despite the changes in wording because other more essential things, such as the orders of succession remained unchanged. The *Gongyang zhuan* thus differentiates between parts which are essential for the trustworthiness of the *Chunqiu* as a book of history and which guarantee its status as written by “trustworthy scribes” (*xin*

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is added because by doing so the well-known name Yangsheng of Qi 齊陽生 (12-6-7), which fits the context well, is referred to. In the (in my opinion correct) interpretation of the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guliang zhuan*, *yang* 陽 in apposition is read as the name of a town in the state of Yan. *Bo* 伯 is Bo Kuan 伯款, who nine years before, in the third year of the reign of Duke Zhao (10-3-7) fled over to Qi from Yan. I suppose that the *Gongyang* commentary just misreads this passage. If this is the case, and the misreading does not go back to “Confucius” then the interesting thing for us is that it could show that this Confucius quote never existed. Since immediately after this quote another quote follows from the *Mengzi*, which is incorporated into the Confucius quote, this passage may indicate the way in which remarks purporting to have been made by Confucius were constructed.

<sup>40</sup> For the meaning of *nai* 乃 as “really, indeed” cf. Dobson 1974: 531.

<sup>41</sup> Most translators follow He Xiu (*SS/ZS*: 2320.2) who comments: 奈女所不知何？寧可強更之乎？此夫子欲為後人法：不欲令人妄億錯。“What about that which you do not know? Would you rather prefer to change it by force? This was what Confucius wished as a law for later generations: He did not want to cause people to make mistakes out a lack of knowledge and speculations based on prejudices.” Malmqvist 1971: 203: “What about that which you do not know?” Ma and Jin 1993: 141: “What should I do with the things you do not know?” Yan 1994: 1697: “If I would change it then you would not know the errors within, what should one then do against it?” He Xiu in his reading ends the sentence after *ru* 如 and reads the *er* 爾 as “you”. Such an isolated *ru* 如, however, cannot be found elsewhere in the early literature. Furthermore, a speech directed to a second person makes no sense because Confucius is talking about himself and his own reading. The main point here is his guilt regarding the changing of the historical material, not the problem that other readers might understand even less than he does himself. I interpret the *er* 爾 with Dobson as the fusion (“allegro-form”) of *er yi* 爾已 (only that and nothing more) as we often find it in the text of the *Gongyang zhuan*. Cf. Dobson 1974: 236, 3.14.



*shi* 信史) and other parts, such as the wording (*ci* 詞), a change of which leads to a certain guilt but not to the loss of its trustworthiness. We find a similar differentiation in *Mengzi* where it says:

其事則齊桓晉文。其文則史。孔子曰：其義則丘竊取之矣。

Its matters are those of Duke Huan of Qi and Duke Wen of Jin. Its style is that of a historian. Confucius said: 'It is its sense of righteousness which I have appropriated secretly.'<sup>42</sup>

*Mengzi* differentiates historical matters, historical style and sense of righteousness. Again, Confucius changed neither the historical matter nor the historical style of the *Chunqiu*, and thus did not diminish its value as a trustworthy book of history. However, *Mengzi* also ascribes to him a guilt which lies in the secret appropriation of the sense of righteousness of the *Chunqiu*.

春秋，天子之事也。是故孔子曰：知我者其惟春秋乎，罪我者其惟春秋乎。

"A *Chunqiu* is the matter of the Son of Heaven. That is why Confucius said: 'Those who understand me will do so only through the *Chunqiu*. Those who condemn me will do so only through the *Chunqiu*.'"<sup>43</sup>

According to this passage, however, the guilt of Confucius again does not consist in his modification of historical content but rather in his appropriation of a matter which is the matter of the Son of Heaven. It is thus the guilt of transgressing the limits of his authority, not of changing historical content.

The *Gongyang zhuan* in this passage uses an important term, that of "trustworthy scribes" (*xinshi*). The trustworthiness<sup>44</sup> of the historical record lies, according to that passage, mainly in its correct transmission of the original order of succession of historical actors and not in its wording. We know from the *Zuozhuan*, again thanks to Yuri Pines, that fixed historiographical rules existed for the order of succession of the signatories of covenants (*meng* 盟) because these

<sup>42</sup> *Mengzi* 4B21.

<sup>43</sup> *Mengzi* 3B9.

<sup>44</sup> Regarding the term "trustworthiness" 信, we find in *Lunyu* 7.1 descriptions of Confucius' attitude towards antiquity: "In transmitting [the old teachings/texts] and not making anything up [on my own], in this trustworthiness and love of antiquity my humble self might be compared to our Lao and Peng". 子曰：述而不作，信而好古，竊比於我老彭。 Or in 7.28: "There may be people who compose without knowing. I am not one of those." 子曰：蓋有不知而作之者，我無是也。

orders of succession guaranteed certain powers in the covenant. These orders of succession were the subjects of lawsuits and were decided upon by precedent, using such cases as the one in 506 B.C. between the states of Cai and Wei upon the question of who should take the first position in the covenant. As a proof a precedence case from 632 B.C.<sup>45</sup> and the text of the relevant covenant from the Zhou archives is referred to.<sup>46</sup> Sometimes the order of succession was fixed on the basis of general guidelines like the one from 712 B.C.: “If members of the Zhou ruling house take part in a covenant the names of other families are listed behind” 周之宗盟，異姓為後。<sup>47</sup> The crucial point of the covenant, and the reason why people if they need to refer back to the archives as proof, is above all a ritual or legal matter, namely the order of succession of the members of the covenant, which determines their relative hierarchical positions. It is this order which Confucius, according to the *Gongyang zhuan*, preserved as the essential historical content of the *Chunqiu*. As to mistakes in the *Chunqiu* text, it could not have been his task to correct them, because then he would become involved in a realm in which he had no authorization or capability, and could thus endanger the trustworthiness of the historical value of the *Chunqiu*. Therefore he does not touch this realm and strictly transmits the historical material even if he discovers mistakes in it.

As we have seen, according to the *Gongyang zhuan* the *Chunqiu* compilation of Confucius serves two purposes, which mutually define each other's limits. On the one hand, Confucius wants to transmit judgments on the historical material, but on the other he wants to preserve the trustworthiness of the *Chunqiu* as a source of history. It is this tension which leads to the specific compilation of the historical material, a compilation which is so reduced to single wordings and formal features of the *Chunqiu* records that the historical content is not changed, but only tinged with moral judgment. This means that nothing is added to the historical material, and, furthermore, that mistakes are not corrected, but that the pre-existing judgments of earlier historiographers (like Dong Hu) are moderated and clearly fantastic matters are omitted. For the modification of the historical material this means that on the one hand Confucius tries to make the

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. ZZ 5-28-5.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. ZZ 11-4-2.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. ZZ 1-11-1.

text grammatically clear in order to expunge ambiguities, and on the other hand wordings are changed in such a way that they offer evaluations without telling a completely different story. This end is achieved by revealing the moral message mainly through formal deviations from the historiographical norm.

#### 4. *Strategies of Sacralization*

What effect does this historical thought have on the concrete exegetical work of the *Gongyang zhuan* which “sacralizes” the text of the *Chunqiu*?

In order to meet the demand of historical trustworthiness, the *Gongyang zhuan* does not interpret records which report anomalies or calamities. There are only two instances where the *Gongyang zhuan* comments on anomalies in a very general way. On all other instances the commentary keeps silent. Furthermore, as already mentioned above, the *Gongyang zhuan* expresses a lack of certainty and admits that it does not know of any explanation, or else gives two alternative explanations. The most important effect of historical criticism on the exegetical technique of the *Gongyang zhuan* is, however, that it tries to prove the reliability of its own interpretations through founding them on defined rules. The *Gongyang zhuan* establishes a system of exegetic rules according to which its own interpretations are made plausible to the reader. These rules on which the exegesis is founded are convincing by reason of the fact that they themselves are depicted as historical rules which are clearly shown to be deduced from the *Chunqiu* text itself. As a first step, the *Gongyang zhuan* deduces a historiographical formula from the routine of the *Chunqiu* records and thus produces a second, fictional and formally ideal, text. In a second step it compares the fictional formula text with the actual text and determines the divergences. In a third step it explains the divergences as deviations which purport to convey the hidden message of Confucius.<sup>48</sup> In that way it may be determined, on the basis of formal rules deduced from the composition of the *Chunqiu*, where the message of Confucius is hidden in the text. Moreover, the emotions of the sage are used as an exegetic technique for the interpretation of the

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<sup>48</sup> For a more detailed account of this exegetical technique cf. Gentz 2003.

text, thus leading to an empathetic exegesis of the text which is interpreted as if read through the eyes of Confucius.<sup>49</sup> The interpretation is thus not only intersubjectively verifiable through a set of exegetic rules, it is also historical in the sense that reasons in terms of historical context are given. This “scientific” attitude, which gives the impression of an historical and objective text interpretation in a quite modern philological sense,<sup>50</sup> responds to its own request for highly elaborated historical criticism. The system of exegetic rules is further developed in the *Chunqiu fanlu* and in He Xiu’s commentary on the *Gongyang zhuan*.

However, despite this highly acclaimed theoretical approach, if we take a closer look at the way the *Gongyang* exegesis works in practice, we discover many failures in its accomplishment of a convincing exegetical system. Rule after rule is newly invented, deviation rules are defined and even deviation rules of deviation rules are introduced, over which nobody has any control any more. Thus the later reproach that the *Gongyang zhuan*’s interpretation would be arbitrary and speculative was so convincing that it was superseded by the other *Chunqiu* commentaries and never again acquired the same status it had in Early Han times.

### 5. The Early Gongyang Tradition

As a part of the official canon-building, the early *Gongyang* tradition concentrates only on the systematization of the main guidelines for historical judgment. Questions as to what is correct historiography no longer have a role to play and have probably shifted to the neighboring institution, the office of historiography.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Gentz 1996.

<sup>50</sup> August Boeckh, a nineteenth-century philologist whose *Encyklopädie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften* still defines the basic methodology for classical philology today, requires for the correct understanding of a text a fourfold text interpretation which should be carried out with regard to grammatical functions, historical context, text genesis and the individual features of the author, cf. Boeckh 1877: 83. All of these four aspects of text interpretation may be found in the *Gongyang zhuan*.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Gentz 2001.

The earliest text which continues and further develops the *Gongyang* exegesis is the *Chunqiu fanlu*, a text traditionally ascribed to Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 195-115 B.C.). In works on Chinese intellectual and political history Dong Zhongshu is generally depicted as *the* intellectual architect of the Early Han. Dong is said to have combined *yinyang wuxing* methods with the texts of the Confucian classics and thus to have associated the classics with the political sphere of the cosmological legitimation of the Early Han. Confucian Orthodoxy in the Early Han is thus always connected to his name. It is furthermore a well-known fact that in this process the *Chunqiu* obtained an unprecedented high status as one of the most important canonical works in Early Han times,<sup>52</sup> if not *the* most important, and that this new status was obtained through the exegetical efforts of Dong Zhongshu, who was a specialist in the *Gongyang* interpretation of the *Chunqiu*.

However, as has been shown already some decades ago,<sup>53</sup> the *wuxing* theory is absent in works which may undoubtedly be ascribed to Dong Zhongshu. The *wuxing* chapters in the *Chunqiu fanlu*, a collection wrongly ascribed wholly to Dong Zhongshu, never refer to the *Chunqiu* or any other classical texts, while those chapters of the *Chunqiu fanlu* which may be ascribed to Dong (namely chapters 1–17) are *Chunqiu* exegetical chapters and do not contain any reference to *wuxing* theory. References to *yinyang* theory are very rare.

The first 17 chapters which, including a postface, form a closed *Chunqiu* exegetical block, no longer contain any historical criticism. Presumably this was not their intent. Instead, questions concerning the essential guidelines of the historical judgments of the *Chunqiu* become more and more important, until we find in chapter 12 a set of ten essential guidelines (“Shi zhi” 十指) without any reference to the *Chunqiu* text. These guidelines are also reflected in chapter 17, which as the last chapter of the *Chunqiu* exegetical block seems to be the postface (as suggested also by its title “Yu xu” 俞序 (Postface of Yu)). The focus of the *Chunqiu* exegetical material of the *Chunqiu fanlu* lies completely in the further analysis, systematization and actualization of the moral fundamentals of the *Chunqiu* for the jurisdiction of the Early Han. In the Early Han period the *Gongyang zhuan* itself gains

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Hiraoka 1966: 23.

<sup>53</sup> Keimatsu Mitsuo 慶松光雄 and Dai Junren 戴君仁 have discovered this fact independently from each other. Cf. Dai 1970: 319–334; Keimatsu 1959. Gary Arbuckle (1993) has given further strong arguments in his dissertation.

the status of a canonical work. As such it is used by a new class of specialists in text interpretation as a handbook for imperial rule, leading to practical handbooks such as the *Chunqiu jueyu* 春秋決獄, a work also ascribed to Dong Zhongshu. The *Chunqiu jueyu* is a handbook of lawsuits of which, despite its influence until the Tang dynasty,<sup>54</sup> only fragments have survived.<sup>55</sup> Using the technical terminology of the Qin legal and administrative rules (for example, those found in Yunmeng Shuihudi, Baoshan or Zhangjiashan) legal cases are formulated in an abstract and generalized way in order to function as general precedents. Principles of the *Chunqiu* are then referred to as basic guidelines for the judgment of a case. Legalist rules are quoted in order to contrast them with the jurisdiction of the *Chunqiu*. The *Chunqiu jueyu* seems to be an attempt to combine and reconcile the strict form of the tradition of Qin legal statutes with the moral contents of the *Chunqiu* exegetical guidelines. In the *Hanshu* we have the record of a series of historical cases in which the *Chunqiu* was taken, in a very similar way, as the basis for legal decisions. In these cases reference is always made to the righteousness of the *Chunqiu* (*Chunqiu zhi yi* 春秋之義). This position is often contrasted with a legalist position, which is polemically depicted as rigid and obviously unjust. The possibility of handling deviating situations through the method of weighing up (*quan* 權) certain cases following the guiding principles given in the *Chunqiu* qualifies the *Chunqiu* jurisdiction for a legal exegesis which is open to interpretation and is not bound by fixed rules. Further investigation will have to show whether this opening up of the jurisdiction originally established under the Qin for the subjective interpretation of the *Chunqiu* tradition, which in contrast based its judgments on the wisdom of Confucius, contributed to the further development of a callous jurisdiction or to a decline of a highly sophisticated and independent jurisdiction. Be that as it may, the legal exegesis of the *Chunqiu* seems to have been the exegetic form of the *Gongyang* tradition which was most influential in

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Hua 1994.

<sup>55</sup> Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, *Chunqiu jueyu* 春秋決獄 or (according to Qi lu 七錄) *Chunqiu duanyu* 春秋斷獄 or (according to *Hanshu* “Yiwenzhi”) *Gongyang Dong Zhongshu zhiyu* 公羊董仲舒治獄 also in Li <sup>3</sup>1985: scroll 640, “Xingfabu” 6, “Jueyu”, p. 8a, vol. 3, p. 2868, or (according to *Suishu jingjizhi* and also Ma Guohan) *Chunqiu jueshi* 春秋決事 or (according to *Chongwen zongmu* 崇文總目) *Chunqiu jueshi bibing* 春秋決事比并 in Ma 1990: 246–247 and most detailed in Cheng 1988: chapter 6. Translations may be found in Wallacker 1985; Arbuckle 1987; Queen 1996: 127–181.

later times and which despite the lack of regard for the *Gongyang zhuan*'s *Chunqiu* exegesis in the Late Han somehow survived within the legal sphere.

The establishment of the *Chunqiu* as one of the leading canonical works of Early Han times came about without its having any connection to the theories of *yinyang wuxing*. There were three reasons that the *Chunqiu* achieved such an important status during the Early Han. The first was the success of efforts to abstract the exegetical operations from the concrete text of the *Chunqiu* and to draw general conclusions on the basis of a systematic commentarial exegesis of the whole text which thus provided the basis for these general conclusions. They could thus be defended against other interpretations and could, on the basis of a highly elaborate text commentary, prove that they themselves were not arbitrary. The second reason was the successful establishment of a new and modern technical terminology (originally developed within the sphere of philosophical Moist and sophist disputation) which rhetorically made up a convincing language for argumentation reaching up even as far as the juridical sphere. These first two points led to the third point, namely that the *Chunqiu* exegesis could on that abstract and general basis and with a modern and convincing argumentation be connected to new and actual themes of Early Han discourse such as the people (*min* 民), punishment (*xing* 刑), talented men (*xian* 賢), virtue (*de* 德) and new cosmological theories—all of which had been conspicuously absent in the *Gongyang zhuan*—furthermore to other important Early Han topics like kingly teachings (*jiao/hua* 教 / 化), change of institutions (*gai zhi* 改制), the cultivated (*wen* 文) vs. the simple (*zhi* 質) etc. These topics could be discovered, through an elaborated exegesis, in the ancient text of the *Chunqiu* and thereby justified for the time of the Han. This was helpful in finding ancient and authoritative precedents for new and important topics of the time.

It is true that the *Chunqiu* achieved its high status in the Early Han through the addition of a new and up-to-date methodology to its exegesis, one which enabled it to become relevant to the political realm. But it was neither the methodology of *yinyang wuxing* nor was this new exegetical system constructed by one person in an ingenious hit. We see instead an exegetical abstraction process at work which slowly develops over different stages up to an exegesis which serves all actual needs in different realms without raising any doubts about

its origin. Methodologically, it becomes more and more “scientific” in that intersubjectively verifiable rules are established for the exegetical operations. The more the semantics of the text could be reduced to a systematic topological reading, the more it fitted into the new context of the Early Han.

It is only a few generations later that the *Chunqiu* exegesis, like the exegesis of other classics, becomes connected to the realm of *yinyang* and *wuxing* and the sphere of omenology. It becomes increasingly prominent in the works of omen experts like Sui Hong 眭弘 (fl. 78 B.C.), Xiahou Sheng 夏侯勝 (fl. 70 B.C.), Jing Fang 京房 (77-37 B.C.), Gu Yong 谷永 (d. 8 B.C.), Liu Xiang 劉向 (ca. 77-6 B.C.), Li Xun 李尋 (fl. 5 B.C.), Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. 23 A.D.) etc.<sup>56</sup> The “Wuxing zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu* is one of the most detailed witnesses to this sort of *Chunqiu* exegesis,<sup>57</sup> which reached its peak with the apocryphal *chenwei* 讖緯 exegesis which was specially developed in the context of the *Chunqiu*.<sup>58</sup>

Related questions about historical truth are henceforward posed and answered in the neighboring department of the equally new class of specialists on historiography. These questions are negotiated in a new genre of historical works, among which the *Shiji* is the first. Whether historical criticism in these works gains a new dimension, and what sorts of innovations are connected to it, will have to be discussed elsewhere.

### Conclusion

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Kern 2000: 28–30.

<sup>57</sup> For a detailed analysis of this chapter cf. Eberhard 1933: 11–110. For the methodology, see Eberhard 1957: 47. Or a newly-written German version Eberhard 1970: 254.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Yasui <sup>2</sup>1984: 221 and Yasui and Nakamura <sup>3</sup>1986: 80. A collection of the *Chunqiu wei* 春秋緯 fragments may be found in Yasui and Nakamura 1971–1988, vol. 4a, b; Ma 1990, vol. 3: 2158–2261; Dull 1966: 186, 481. In the apocryphal *Chunqiu wei* 春秋緯, as we observed for the later *Chunqiu* exegesis, concrete precedent cases no longer play a role. Instead, we find a concentration on numerological-astronomical correlations in connection with the *wuxing* theory, neither of which shows any relation to *Chunqiu* exegesis. In its methodology this work rather resembles the more fully transmitted *Yiwei* 易緯 which, however, relates the trigrams or hexagrams to Yin and Yang (cf. for example Yasui and Nakamura 1971–1988, vol. 1b: 38) and in which—apart from general statements—the *wuxing* theory does not play any role.



其祝史薦信，是言罪也。其蓋失數美，是矯誣也。進退無辭，則虛以求媚。是以鬼神不饗其國以禍之。祝史與焉。所以天昏孤疾者，為暴君使也。其言僭慢於鬼神。

The priests and historiographers [of a bad ruler], in setting forth the truth, must speak of his offences. If they cover his errors and speak of excellences, they are bearing false testimony; when they would advance or retire, they have nothing which they can rightly say, and so they may vainly seek to flatter. Therefore the Spirits will not accept the offerings, and the State is made to suffer misery, in which the priests and historiographers share. Short lives, premature deaths, bereavements and sicknesses, are caused by the oppression of the ruler; the words [of the priests and historiographers] are false, and an insult to the spirits.<sup>59</sup>

Posing the question about historical truth and the *Gongyang* exegesis I would like to conclude as follows. Although questions as to the trustworthiness and consistency of sources are asked for the first time in the *Gongyang zhuan*, they are not about historical truth, but serve rather to ascertain the right effectiveness of the historical record with regard to the order of the world. An inaccurate historical account is in that view either not efficacious, or efficacious in the wrong way. The correct historical account only serves as a basis for a correct judgment, which again as a historical precedent is the basis for actual correct behaviour. The historiographer, in the same way as the priest, the diviner and calendar specialist, thus carries part of the responsibility for the right actions of the ruler and therefore for the right order of the world. His job is a sort of professional craftsmanship, which includes the duty of sustaining the world order. A mistake weighs heavy not for moral reasons but rather because a wrong regulation of the order, no matter whether conceptualized in a demonological model (as in the above cited passage from *Zuozhuan* Zhao 20. *fu*4) or a correlative model, will manifest itself in correspondence to some other sphere as a harmful consequence. Since imperial action had to orientate itself in line with historical precedents in that the ruler's behaviour had to be negotiated within the boundaries of moral, ritual and political rules defined through a fixed corpus of historical precedents, historical criticism was necessary in order to assure right action. An abstract philosophical or historical truth had no place in pre-Buddhist China, perhaps not even until the arrival of the first Christian missionaries. Historical diagnosis which formed the basis of the diagnosis of the

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. ZZ 10-20. *fu*4, translation according to Legge 1991: 683.

present was dependent upon correct historical accounts which for their trustworthiness relied on historical criticism.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> A very early example may be found in the famous episode of the “Jin teng 金滕” chapter of the *Shangshu*, in which the Duke of Zhou demonstrates his loyalty through writing down his prayer for the sick ruler. This writing is preserved in a metal-bound coffer, from where it is taken out at a time of disorder when the Duke of Zhou has been banished for slander. The catastrophic violent storm which this causes only ends when the Duke of Zhou, on the evidence of the recorded prayer found in the metal-bound coffer (and thus on the basis of the true historical facts), is pardoned and recalled to court. The wrong historical judgment in this case led to harsh consequences in the shape of a natural calamity. Another famous case from the *Zuo zhuan* (the twenty-fifth year of Duke Xiang, 9-25-2) describes how the historiographer made a record of a regicide. The accused, Cui Shu, is so enraged about this record that he kills him. Two younger brothers who succeed him as historiographers are also killed because they too report the assassination. When a third brother again records the assassination, Cui Shu gives up his killing. When a historiographer from the south hears of this affair he travels north, taking with him tablets (on which the affair is noted) in order to remonstrate. While on his way he receives the news that the affair has finally been recorded, and he returns home. The historiographers do not insist on historical truth but on correct historical judgment. In *Guoyu* “Luyu shang” 04.04 the historiographer warns his ruler about a certain action by telling him that there is no precedent (*gu* 故) for this action. When the ruler answers that he will create a new one, the historiographer replies that in case of success he will record it as a precedent, in case of failure, however, he will record it as treachery (*ni* 逆), cf. *Guoyu* “Luyu shang,” 04.04, 1988: 156. In this case again the historiographer is only concerned with the correct historical judgment.

## Abbreviations and quotations

*SJ*: Sima Qian 司馬遷 (<sup>1</sup>1959, <sup>9</sup>1985), *Shiji* 史記. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju

*SSJZS*: Ruan Yuan 阮元 (ed.) (<sup>1</sup>1980, <sup>4</sup>1987), *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.

*ZZ*: *Zuozhuan*.

*Chunqiu* records are quoted according to Hung, William 洪業, *Chunqiu jingzhuan yinde* 春秋經傳引得 (Combined Concordances to *Ch'un ch'iu*, *Kung yang*, *Ku liang* and *Tso chuan*) (<sup>1</sup>1983, <sup>3</sup>1988) (orig. *Harvard Yenching Index*, Peiping, 1937), reprint Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe. The twelve dukes are counted as follows: 1. Yin 隱, 2. Huan 桓, 3. Zhuang 莊, 4. Min 閔, 5. Xi 僖, 6. Wen 文, 7. Xuan 宣, 8. Cheng 成, 9. Xiang 襄, 10. Zhao 昭, 11. Ding 定, 12. Ai 哀. Every record is quoted as a combination of numbers. Thus the fourth record in the third year of the reign of Duke Huan is quoted as 2-3-4.

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